

Ms Tessa Craig 6750  
London Borough of Camden  
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c/o Town Hall,  
Judd Street  
London WC1H 9JE

Mr and Mrs Duncan Macpherson  
116 Albert Street  
London NW1 7NE

5 December 2017

**RE: Planning Application 2017/5071/P**

**Site Address: Ort House Conference Centre 126 Albert Street London NW1 7NE**

Ms. Craig,

We live one house away from ORT House who has submitted the above application. This letter sets out our objections and reasons. In brief, our concerns regard:

1. the absence of the Proposed Elevation for the South side of the building;
2. the proposed windows on the first floor south-facing wall;
  - our privacy;
  - the negative environmental impact of south-facing windows;
3. the disturbance caused by the proposed site of the new Plant Room;
  - the nuisance of noise;
  - the nuisance of vibrations;
4. the proposed windows on the ground floor façade;
5. the requested access.

**1. The absence of Proposed Elevation, south-facing side**

1.1 The papers do not include a proposal for the Elevation of the southern side of the building despite it being clearly the side where the most changes are proposed.

1.2 Whether by design or by mistake, it is unacceptable to submit a planning application without the most important information.

## **2. The First Floor windows, south-facing wall**

- 2.1 We oppose the four bay windows with obscure glazing on the south-facing wall (see PA11 – Pr. FF). The windows are large, extremely close, and would directly overlook us.
- 2.2 It is not stated on the proposed plan whether the bay windows open or not. There is no point having windows with occluded glass if they can open; any attempt to preserve privacy would be negated.
- 2.3 It is not clear whether the occluded glass is on all three panes of each window. People would easily be able to look out through the side openings.
- 2.4 Even if it is occluded glass, there is no assurance that ORT House will not change the glass later on.
- 2.5 In 2000, a similar planning application to install windows in the same wall was opposed by a large number of residents who would have been overlooked. The application was refused by the Planning Committee on the grounds that it would be too intrusive.
- 2.6 When it was first built in 1975, the building was designed not to overlook the private property of the residents, which is why the small windows on the ground floor are above head height. The building was intended to be primarily a conference centre, and remains so today. Ort House Conference Centre remains an office building with the capacity to house a large number of people during the working day. This means a lot of people have the potential of looking down over private gardens.
- 2.7 An additional concern regards the impact of these windows on the energy and sustainability goals. Paragraph 5.9 of the Energy and Sustainability Statement reminds us that “Major development proposals should reduce potential overheating and reliance on air conditioning systems and demonstrate this in accordance with the following cooling hierarchy:
  1. Minimise internal heat generation through energy efficient design
  2. Reduce the amount of heat entering a building in the summer through orientation, shading, albedo, fenestration, insulation and green roofs and walls” [...]

- 2.8 Crucially, the proposed bay windows, which are all south-facing, have not been included in the Energy and Sustainability Statement. Such an omission is unacceptable because the increased heat they will let into the building in the summer, thereby increasing the requirement for air conditioning and energy use.
- 2.9 On page 23 of the Energy and Sustainability Statement, ORT House make a non-related statement that ORT House intend to use “shading techniques (such as blinds or solar glazing) integrated across the elevations where possible” to address point 2 of the cooling hierarchy. It is worth noting that the inclusion of blinds does not mean that the people in the offices will use them.
- 2.10 We propose that instead of south-facing bay windows, ORT House should use skylights with solar glazing on the flat roof above. This solution provides the building with the light they seek, whilst ensuring the continued protection of neighbour privacy and of the environment.

### **3. The Plant Room disturbances: noise level and vibrational sounds**

- 3.1 The stated noise level in relation to the proposed Plant Room at paragraph 4.05 of the Background Noise Survey Report is simply wrong. Position 1 is completely the wrong place to measure the noise level. The noise measured at Position 1 is not representative of the noise climate at the actual location for the proposed Plant Room.
- 3.2 To obtain an accurate measurement of the current noise climate at the specified location, ORT House must measure from the rear of the neighbour’s house, 118 Albert Street, outside the closest residential façade and in the closest garden. This is because the gardens are, apart from birdsong, almost always completely silent.
- 3.3 Furthermore, the type of sound that emanates from a plant room is qualitatively different from the sound of distant traffic, as it has a low timbre, vibrational sound, which is known to have a significant effect on the quality of life. This type of noise carries a very long way, just as one can hear the Tube from a distance in the basement of London houses.
- 3.4 In addition, paragraph 2.03 states “the plant Room is likely to be ventilated via louvers/ducts terminating into a newly formed light well along the southern boundary of the building, separated from the adjoining residential property with a boundary wall.” It is clear that the light well will act as a sound box, thereby amplifying the noise.

3.5 The planning does not give reasons why the Plant Room could not be situated on the other side of the building, in the North-West corner of the basement.

#### **4. The Ground Floor windows, façade**

4.1 We oppose the expansion of the windows on the Ground Floor façade (see PA 1- - Pr. GF; PA 14 – Pr. elevation).

4.2 If you observe the existing elevation on PA 14 – Pr. elevation, the current building has been clearly designed to comply with the historical style of the street and the conservation area which is composed of grade-2 listed terraced dwellings. To increase the size of the windows would break the symmetry of this style and negate the purpose of a conservation area.

4.3 The Design and Access Statement is misleading when addressing the increase of the windows, whether by design or by mistake. In the drawing of the Existing Elevation on page 20, the windows are made to appear full length, extending to the ground. This is not the case. The windows in fact mirror the historical context of the street and of the terraced houses next door (see the photograph on page 10 of the Design and Access Statement).

#### **5. Requested access**

5.1 The proposed access is unacceptable. On page 20 of the Construction Management Plan, ORT House seek access 5 days per week, 8am – 6pm, and the Saturdays 8am - 1pm mornings. The answer appears to be that Saturdays are “by arrangement only”.

5.2 We object to all works on Saturdays. Firstly, the requirement for arrangement is far too vague – one wonders by arrangement with whom? We would like clear-cut working hours and to avoid any argument over Saturday access. Secondly, this is a residential area and the proposed works will take place over the summer. We have small children who will be in the garden all the time during the holidays and on weekends during term times.

We hope this letter sets our concerns out clearly and that you find the suggested alternatives reasonable. Please do not hesitate to contact us at the above address or by email or telephone (below) if you have any questions regarding our statement.

Finally, we wish to speak at the hearing of the planning application, and would be very grateful if you could inform us of the date and time it is scheduled.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline and Duncan Macpherson

